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ABSTRACT

The philosophy of Transcendentalism developed in the early nineteenth century among such thinkers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, Bronson Alcott, and Caleb Sprague Henry. Transcendentalism emphasized the need for social reform that would lead the individual to self-reliance, and education was seen as the surest way to permanent and progressive reform. Transcendentalism's stress on the individual introduced a new respect for the child's individuality and fostered child-centered learning, stressing the development of children's thinking skills and respecting individual differences. The effects of Transcendentalism on higher education include the introduction of the elective system of course selection and the importance of the utility of learning. For education at all levels, Transcendentalism advocated practical and vocational education and equal opportunity for women and minorities. (DF)

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TRANSCENDENTALISM AND THE PROMISE OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Janette E. Pemberton

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Introduction

The transcendentalists were a group of early nineteenth century scholars whose greatest burden was to effect a reform in the prevailing philosophy of the day. These scholars, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, Bronson Alcott, Caleb Sprague Henry and others, were so called because of their belief in an order of truths which transcends the sphere of the external senses. The primary idea of transcendentalism, therefore, is the supremacy of mind over matter. Basic to their beliefs is the fact that there is a light which enlightens everyone who enters this world; regardless of a person's state, he or she can perceive spiritual truth when it is clearly imparted. They rejected the notion that selected groups of scholars, or divines, or the prescriptions of a creed should constitute the ultimate appeal on all moral questions. Rather, such appeal should be left to the common sense of the human race.

Perhaps the main focus of transcendalism was on the need for reform. In his essays "Works and Days" and "The Fortune of the Republic", Emerson clearly recognized that many evils of his day needed reform. The chief concern seemed less to propose how to lessen the current evils than to suggest methods of reform with long-term effect. The transcendentalists urged the kind of reform which would lead the individual ultimately to depend on his own resources. Emerson, and other transcendentalists as well, regarded education as the surest way to permanent and progressive reform.

This paper takes a look at the transcendentalist concept of individualism and its implications for childhood and higher education reform. The social

aims of the transcendentalists as they relate to higher education as well as to the concept of equal educational opportunity will also be discussed. The third aspect to be discussed is the conflicting ideas of the transcendentalists who sometimes seemed to cling to traditional ideas in the midst of their advocacy of change, and the compromise that they sought.

I. The Background

A. The Roots of Transcendentalist Philosophy

Transcendentalism has been defined as a warm and intuitional religious, aesthetic, philosophical and ethical movement in nineteenth century America, sometimes referred to as the American tributary of European Romanticism. It has been characterized by a theoretical as well as a practical way of life and a literary expression within the tradition of idealism. Certain political and economic developments during the latter part of the eighteenth century prepared the way and created the mood for transcendentalism.

The last quarter of the eighteenth century was marked by certain reform movements, accompanied by a new optimism about man's possibilities and perfectibility. The Enlightenment was full of ideas and hope for man's progress and betterment. The first three decades of the nineteenth century saw great democratic upheavals, revolutions, and new experiments with constitutions. As the transcendentalists made the quality of life in America their main concern, transcendentalism reflected the optimism and hope of the age.

In the economic sphere progressive materialism became the hallmark of the Industrial Revolution. In Europe, attempts to combat the social evils were carried out in the form of experiments in socialism, such as the collectives of Charles Fourier. Transcendentalism also experimented at Brook Farm and at Fruitlands in Massachusetts with collectivism, although its leaders who had so vigorously promoted individualism gave only token support for the projects. The great leaders of the movement,

however were highly sympathetic with all social efforts aimed at plain living and high thinking, although they held that the mind should not be exalted at the expense of the emotions.

In upholding the role of the emotions, transcendentalism seemed to join hands with Romanticism. The main contribution of Romanticism to the aesthetic life of the period lay in its reaction against formalism and conventions in poetry and the fine arts, as well as against austerity and restraints in expression. Romanticism espoused spontaneity, color, music, and intuition, and declared against cold description. Transcendentalism shared the Romantic idea that form was less important than inspiration, enthusiasm, emotion, and spirituality.

The emphasis on spirituality is very significant in the rise and development of Transcendentalism. The influence of eighteenth century deism, the deterioration of the Calvinist movement, the weakness of Catholicism in the United States, all had a devastating effect upon conventional spirituality. Ethics rather than religion was emphasized. Transcendentalism, like other minor sects such as the Quakers, reacted against the secularism of the age in an effort to regain the lost spirituality. The result of the religious emphasis of Transcendentalism, however, was a side-stepping of traditional Christianity, and advocating a type of pantheism with a God immanent in man and in the world. The source of everything was placed in an impersonal, transcendental Oversoul.

The Transcendentalists held that God or the Oversoul communicated directly with the individual. Basic to their philosophy, therefore, was the concept of intuitionalism, a transcendence of the senses, whereby ideas flow directly into the mind from God. Above all, Transcendentalism

sought to establish the fact that there is evidence of Divinity in every living heart and conscience. This was in reaction against the materialism, skepticism, cold intellectualism, and empiricism which prevailed. Man without the Transcendent Spirit does not deserve respect. Only in a spiritual way should the world be viewed. Such a view greatly influenced transcendentalist ideas on knowledge and education. The transcendentalists viewed knowledge as a form of being or a condition and not a mere acquirement. At its best, knowledge is a mystical union with God. The transcendental theory of knowledge is mainly concerned with the way Nature teaches man and how man is able to receive this teaching.

B: Conflict and Compromise

Only careful reading and study of the the ideas of the transcendentalists can preclude charges of inconsistences. At times, caught between the forces of conservatism and the forces of change, the transcendentalists often seemed in a dilemma. At other times they seemed torn between contending views or extreme positions on certain issues. At still other times religious heritage came into open conflict with modern liberal views. Surely it was not easy to cast aside the weight of tradition notwithstanding their earnest desire for reform.

Traditional influences were many and quite strong. H.C. Goddard has correctly described transcendentalism as "the blending of Platonic methephysics and the Puritan spirit."[1] As transcendentalism drew principles from Plato it was bound to be in conflict. On the one hand, the Platonic doctrine of innate, eternal, and immutable ideas suggests a strong stand

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[1] H.C. Goddard, Studies in New England Transcendentalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908) p. 189.

for changelessness which ran counter to transcendentalist ideas for change. Inherent in the Platonic philosophy was the concept of the intellectual elite. Yet, the writings of Plato and Aristotle indicate that there was no faculty given, nor indeed any intellectual function which was not shared by the meanest of their countrymen. Such dichotomy of ideas was bound to be reflected in the contrasting views of the transcendentalists.

Emerson was quite aware of the strength of traditional ideas. In a statement on "The Transcendentalist," he observed:

> The first thing we have to say respecting what are called new views here in New England at the present time is, that they are not new but the very oldest of thoughts cast into the mold of these new times.[2]

Referring to the opposing tensions between conservatism and reform Emerson also noted:

> And so, whilst we do not go beyond general statements, it may be safely affirmed of these two metaphysical antagonists, that each is a good half, but an impossible whole.[3]

Certain extreme views presented as complete in themselves also created problems in the interpretation and understanding of transcendentalist ideas. The concept of individualism provides a good example. Firstly, different scholars have drawn different conclusions from Emerson's emphasis on self-reliant individualism. Vernon Parrington notes that Emerson's advocacy of individualism "was the same revolutionary conception ... that Rosseau

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2 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Complete Writings, Vol. I, p. 101.

3 Ibid., p. 92.

had come upon ...."[4] On the other hand, Harry Hayden Clark comments on Emerson's individualism as "the Platonic concept of truly focussed individualism culminating in brotherly unity."[5]

The transcendentalist position on elitism also indicates conflicting thoughts and ideas as expressions of Emerson reveal . In one passage from "Considerations By The Way" Emerson pays much regard to the common man:

> A Fifth-Avenue Landlord, A West-end householder, is not the highest style of man; and though good hearts and sound minds are of no condition, yet he who is to be wise for many must not be protected. He must know the huts where poor men lie, and the chores which poor men do.[6]

But a little earlier Emerson showed disdain for the masses:

> Leave this hypocritical prating about the masses.... I do not wish any mass at all, but honest men only, lovely, sweet accomplished women only, and no gin-drinking million stockingers or lazzaroni at all.[7]

The dilemma was also reflected in transcendentalist views on individualism. Frederic Henry Hedge's statement on self-culture sums up these views:

> Of self-culture, as of all other things worth seeking, the price is a single devotion to duty, devotion which shall exclude all aims and ends, that do not directly tend to promote it.... No emoluments must seduce him from the rigor of his devotion.[8]

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4 Vernon Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), Vol. II, p. 390.

5 Harry Hayden Clark, "Conservatory and Mediatory Emphases in Emerson's Thought" in Transcendentalism and Its Legacy ed. Myron Simon and Thornton H. Parsons (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 50.

6 R. W. Emerson, The Conduct of Life, p. 247.

7 Ibid., p. 237.

8 Perry Miller, op. cit, pp. 472-473.

Such rigid statements on individualism at times created problems for the transcendentalists who eventually had to come to grips with the reality and growing importance of the social aspects of life. The challenge was great.

Socialistic schemes of reform were generally frowned upon by Emerson as a consideration of his relation to the Brook Farm experiments reveals. Yet he was always mindful of the importance of the social aspects of life. In his "Social Aims," he pleaded for an understanding of the social barriers operating in society. It was Orestes A. Brownson, however, who most fully expounded the importance of the social element:

> If the development and growth of the social element be not the dominant sentiment of the age, we would ask what means these demands for social reform which come to our ears on every breeze, from every land?[9]

But it was not too long before the transcendentalists realized the need for compromise on their divergent views. Frederic Henry Hedge expresses this very clearly:

> Our mortal life is a perpetual compromise, the resultant of two conflicting forces, our own will being one, and circumstance the other, - a compromise between the ideal in mind and the pressure of our lot.[10]

Indeed the transcendentalists soon realized that the individualistic concerns of life, though very important, are only part of the picture. The social aspects are just as important. The one must balance the other.

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[9] As quoted by Perry Miller, op.cit., p. 102.

[10] Frederic Henry Hedge, Sermons (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), p. 200.

The compromise objective was bound to influence the dualistic outlook of the transcendentalists on educational reform. Emerson, on the one hand, adopts the individualistic aim of Pestalozzi whom he quotes as stating that "no man is willing or able to help any other man."[11] On the other hand, Emerson anticipates Horace Mann in his emphasis on the social aims of education. Expressing the student's need for help from others, Emerson urged games, charades, verses of society, song and frequent communication, and correspondence with his wisest and best friends, for society he must have or he is poor indeed. He insisted on the compromise that the most genial and amiable of men must alternate society with solitude.

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[11] Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), Vol. II. p. 483.

II. Individual Aims

A. Ideas on Individualism and Childhood

One of the main thrusts of transcendentalism, which was profoundly to effect educational reform, was the promotion of individualism. Emerson emphasized this aspect in his statement on Self-Reliance:

> Insist on yourself, never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession.[12]

Other transcendentalists were equally insistent on individualism or self-reliance. In 1841 Frederick Henry Hedge noted that "the work of life, so far as the individual is concerned, and that to which the scholar is particularly called, is self-culture - the perfect unfolding of our individual nature."[13] Hedge further stated that every effort should be devoted to this end above all others.

This transcendental individualism found supreme expression in Thoreau's statement on "Civil Disobedience" in which he pleaded that one of the hallmarks of a free and enlightened state is its recognition of the individual as a higher and independent power declaring that the state can have no pure right over his person and property but what he concedes to it. [14]

It is true that the concept of individualism, like the other ideas of the transcendentalists, did not originate with them. Plato and Aristotle

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[12] Ralph Waldo Emerson, on "Self-Reliance" in Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Stephen E. Whicher Boston: Houghton, Miffling Company, (Double Day, Page and Company, 1960), p. 195.

[13] Frederick Henry Hedge, "The Art of Life", as quoted by Perry Miller, The Transcendentalists (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950) p. 472.

[14] Aesthetic Papers, ed. Elizabeth Peabody (Gainesville: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1957). p. 211

both testified of the presence and effect of individualism in Greek society; sixteenth century Europe espoused individualistic capitalism; seventeenth century Europe and America witnessed the develcpment of a kind of liberal individualism; Rousseau too, advocated individualism in the eighteenth century; the torch was then taken up and duly strengthened by the nineteenth century American transcendentalists. This individualistic conception of man soon joined hands with the newer psychology of individual differences which led to the late nineteenth century developments in experimental psychology.

One of the off-shoots of transcendental individualism which had important implications for educational reform was that pertaining to childhood. The early nineteenth century witnessed new developments in that direction. A new respect for the child, for his individuality, and for the active qualities of his nature had been forcing a fresh look at the role of rigid discipline and traditional formal learning, Rousseau's Emile had emphasized the freedom of the child, and Pestalozzi, Herbart, and Froebel had focussed their thoughts on the child also. Froebel regarded the child as an agency whereby God's will in human nature is fulfilled.

In his remarks on "Education" Emerson voiced new respect for the child:

> "I believe that our own experience instructs us that the secret of Education lies in respecting the pupil. It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do. It is chosen and foreordained, and he only holds the key to his own secret. By your tampering and thwarting and too much governing he may be hindered from his end and kept out of his own. Respect the child. Trespass not on his solitude".[15]

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[15] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lectures and Biographical Sketches, Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1904), p. 143.

Bronson Alcott also expressed his thoughts in this new aspect of reverence for the child. In his journal for September 30, 1835, he wrote: "Go thou and look into an infant's face, and say if thou hast within thee what thou beholdest . . ."[16] Seven years earlier Alcott wrote:

> The province of the instructor should be simple awakening, invigorating, directing, rather than the forcing of the child's faculties upon prescribed and exclusive courses of thought. He should look to the child to see what is to be done, rather than to his book or system. The child is the Book. The operations of his mind are the true system. Let him study these carefully and his success is sure.[17]

The naturalism of Locke and Rousseau which was so fundamental to the development of child-centered learning was also reflected in transcendentalist views. Emerson once declared that "this function of opening and feeding the human mind is not to be fulfilled by any mechanical or military method; it is not to be trusted to any skill less larger than Nature itself"[18] Transcendentalist views on the natural method, therefore, strengthened the philosophy that the natural instincts of the child should provide the motives for learning rather than external prodding and compulsion. This presaged significant developments in education with regard to the child-centered school.

Bronson Alcott's contribution to the idea of the child-centered school was by no means minimal. He is well-known for certain significant

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16 The Journals of Bronson Alcott. Vol. I, Selected and Edited by Odell Sheppard (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, I-c., 1938)- p.68

17 Ibid., p. 12.

18 Ralph Walso Emerson, op. cit., p. 148.

statements on child-hood such as "Play is the appointed dispensation of childhood" and "The primary want of infancy is enjoyment."[19] It is true that one might challenge these statements in the light of what has been revealed in practice at Mr. Alcott's own school. Elizabeth Palmer Peabody in her record of daily events showed that Mr. Alcott was at times a strict disciplinarian and often punished the children severely. However, it is important to note the real motives behind his actions. A little girl at his school was told, "You come here to learn how to behave at home: I do not mean how to make bows and curtsies, but to feel and think."[20] Elizabeth Peabody also noted that he is so successful in arousing the activity of the children's own minds, and he gives such free scope to their associations that his personal pecularities are likely to have much less influence than those of most instructors."[21]

The individualistic aims of education significantly strengthened developments in individual differences in learning. The transcendentalists added their voices to the demand for greater attention to be paid to individual differences among children. Emerson wrote in his journal on October 14, 1832, "that every man must learn in a different way."[22] Renewed emphasis was also placed on individual student needs and interests. All this had tremendous implications for later developments

[19]A. Bronson Alcott, Observations on the Principles and Methods of Infant Instruction (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1830), p. 5.

[20]Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Record of a School (New York: Arms Press and the New York Times, 1969), pp. 93-94.

[21]Ibid. p. VII.

[22]Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), Vol. II, p. 521.

in child-psychology, the child-centered school, and experimental psychology. It meant, among other things, a lessening of rigid discipline and a de-emphasis of traditional learning methods. This indeed affected educational developments not only at the lower levels but also at the higher levels as well.

B. Individualism and Curriculum Reform in Higher Education.

The influence of transcendental individualism was strongly felt in the realm of higher education. More and more attention was given to the individual nature of students in order that they might develop adequately according to their particular needs, interests, and abilities. This helped to prepare the way for, as well as to justify the elective system as a means whereby students might exercise free choice of studies most valuable to them. The elective system was introduced at Harvard University by Charles W. Eliot who became President of that institution in 1869.

Since the middle of the eighteenth century the impact of the new sciences aided by the utilitarian spirit of reform resulted in the actual practice of the "voluntary" or elective principle at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. Students could elect to study such subjects as dancing, writing, and book-keeping. The mid-nineteenth century also witnessed the effective theory and practice of the elective system as formulated by President Francis Wayland of Brown University in the 1850's. But the Elective System of President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard University during the latter part of the nineteenth century was rather epoch-making, and in this the influence of transcendentalists views was by no means slight.

When Eliot became President of Harvard University in 1869, Emerson had for two years been Overseer of Harvard College, where he served on a committee which recommended the Elective System. Harry Baden Clark has observed:

> Thus, Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance which helped to prepare the minds of the public for the acceptance of the system helped to convert Eliot himself to it, and as an overseer Emerson himself played an immediate part in getting it framed and put into actual practice. The system is a good example of the interplary of tradition and innovation in his thinking.[23]

Emerson's ideas on self-reliance had greatly influenced Eliot, who was also impressed by Emerson's criticisms of the old rote learning methods and concepts of education. In his inaugural address as President of Harvard College in 1869, Eliot referred to Emerson in this matter:

> To learn by rote a list of dates is not to study history. Mr. Emerson says that history is biography. In a deep sense this is true. Certainly, the best way to impart the facts of history to the young is through the quick interest they take in the lives of the men and women who fill great historical scenes or epitomize epochs.[24]

Indeed this emphasis on students' interest was to have a tremendous effect on education at all levels. The principle of interest is involved when the individual becomes identified with facts to be learned, and interest provides the moving or driving force. Individualized interest constituted the basis for individualized instruction which was experimented at the more progressive colleges and universities in America during the first half of the twentieth century.

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[23] Harry Bayden Clark, op. cit., p. 38

[24] Charles W. Eliot, Educational Reform, Essays and Addresses (New York: The Century Co., 1898), p. 7.

The colleges and universities had come under heavy attack by the transcendentalists early in the nineteenth century. Emerson himself was quite critical of the learning atmosphere at Harvard when he wrote:

> I went to Cambridge when a boy
> To hear the gownsmen
> And found more sense
> In the way than in the hall.[25]

Very strong criticisms of the higher learning also came from other transcendentalists. Caleb Sprague Henry's address on "The True Idea of the University," delivered before the Association of the Alumni of the University of the City of New York in June, 1852, represented a genuine call for higher education reform. "I have said, gentlemen, "he stated, "that in this country we have no Universities. We have not. We have the name, but not the things."[26]

It is significant to note that Cardinal Newman's criticism of English Universities came only five months after C.S. Henry's criticism of American Universities. In November 1852, Newman observed that the English University "was giving no education at all to the youth committed to its keeping...."[27] C.S. Henry conceived of a university as "an institution which affords every possible advantage for the acquisition

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[25] Ralph L. Rusk, The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949(, p. 66.

[26] C.S. Henry, The True Idea of the University (New York: Published by the Association of the Alumni of the University of the City of New York, 1853), p. 5.

[27] John Henry Cardinal Newman, The Idea of a University (Westminister, Md.: Christian Classics, 1973) p. 1.

of every branch of science and learning included within the circle of liberal studies."[28] And Newman stressed that the university is a place "with the one object of advancing universal knowledge."[29] On this basis both writers advocated the inclusion of theology among the university subjects. Newman insisted that a university, "by its very name professes to teach universal knowledge: Theology is surely a branch of knowledge."[30] C.S. Henry urged that "A University, in the proper sense of the term, without a Faculty of Theology is a thing that cannot be created."[31]

C. S. Henry was concerned not only with the creation of the university but also with the reform of the colleges. He attacked the four-year under-graduate course into which had been "crowded a multitude of additional studies."[32] It is somewhat paradoxical that the very individualistic aim of education which prompted serious consideration of the individual needs and interests of students was partly responsible for that situation. Henry, however, had no objection to courses of practical instruction which the times seemed to demand, provided that they were "not crowded into the four years of undergraduate courses, but come after it or on the side of it,"[33] Even more so, he recommended that "such

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[28] C. S. Henry, p. 6.

[29] Cardinal Newman, p. 23

[30] Ibid, pp. 19-20

[31] C.S. Henry, p. 16

[32] Ibid, p. 11.

[33] Ibid., p. 13.

practical courses be, in their nature, either literary or scientific." That recommendation had significant implications for the development of vocational and professional education in the United States.

III. Social Aims

A. Positing a More Practical Conception of Education

One of the marked characteristics of transcendentalism is the dualistic nature of its philosophy. It at once exalts the importance of complete self-reliance, self-culture, and individualism as well as the need for good social living, and the adoption of social culture. Frederic Henry Hedge was quite definite with regard to self-culture:

> "The work of life so far as the individual is concerned, and that to which the scholar is particularly called, is self-culture - the perfect unfolding of our individual nature ... The business of self-culture admits of no compromise"[34]

In striking contrast, however, Hedge also warns of the need to recognize the influence of social culture: "We gain something by our efforts and yield something to the force of the stream."[35]

Transcendentalist ideas on the social aims of education emerged as a reaction to the prevailing concept of utilitarianism. The transcendentalists in their zeal for reform seized the moment to demonstrate a new interpretation of utilitarianism. Indeed, transcendental ethics was conceived as a correlative to utilitarianism which was considered to be the secular ethical theory of the day. Utilitarianism stressed the usefulness of the good and that the determination of right conduct

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[34] Frederic Henry Hedge in "The Art of Life,: as quoted by Perry Miller in The Transcendentalists (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 472.

[35] F. H. Hedge, Sermons (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), p. 200.

is the usefulness of its consequences. However, it dramatized the individualistic aim in that it emphasized the principle of self-interest. Everywhere the theories of moralists had sought to associate utilitarianism with the idea that an enlightened self-interest was the highest, and indeed the only principle of action. The transcendentalists exposed the short-comings of utilitarianism by pointing to its practical failure.

Transcendentalist Caleb Sprague Henry was very forceful in his criticism of the prevailing concept of utilitarianism which assumed among other things that pleasure was the only motive for virtuous action. Henry argued that pleasure cannot be a motive until it exists and has been felt. He further strengthened his position by pointing to the influence of such practical principles as appetites, passions, emotions, and feelings of obligation on the human will. Such illustrations served to provide a kind of driving force that was bound to be reflected in the transcendentalists' views on practical education.

Transcendentalist ideas on practicality of educational experience were further influence and strengthened by the growing new outlook on knowledge as a means to an end. Parallel to their thinking in this direction was their view of the utility of beauty and art. Emerson stressed the practical usefulness of art: "I think sculpture and painting have an effect to teach us manners and abolish hurry."[36] Caleb Sprague Henry, despite his earlier leaning toward art for its own sake, was willing to admit the purest and most fervent love of art cannot of itself alone make Michael Angelos or Raphaels,

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36 R.W. Emerson, The Conduct of Life (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1888), p. 153.

or Shakespeares."[37] With reference to the utility of art Henry further pointed out that Shakespeare was a theatrical manager who to some extent had an eye to present success and money.

Emerson and Henry, therefore, despite earlier positions on beauty and knowledge for their own sakes had come to realize the importance of the utility and adaptability of beauty insofar as beauty appears in the form of art. Emerson went a step further and recognized the utility of learning:

> Novels are as useful as Bibles if they teach you the secret that the best life is conversation, and the greatest success is confidence, or perfect understanding between sincere people.[38]

This thought suggests not only the importance of the utility of learning but also the significance of the idea that success in life depends to no small degree on mutual understanding and interdependence.

The thoughts of Frederick Henry Hedge on the need for and value of interdependence and cooperation represent and reflect the social aims in the transcendentalist philosophy:

> We owe men everyting. We owe them position in society which hold by their permission. We owe them the protection of their laws, the benefit of their institution, the results of their labor, the aids to improvement, the stores of knowledge, the wealth of thought which they have ministered and do forever minister to body, mind and soul.....[39]

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[37] C.S. Henry, About Men and Things, Papers from My Study Table Drawer (New York: Thomas Whittaker, No. 2 Bible House, 1873), p. 223.

[38] R. W. Emerson, op. cit., p. 184.

[39] Ibid., p. 173.

This social philosophy was evident in the educational aims and principles of education at Brook Farm:

> And whoever does not measure what society owes to its members of cherishing and instruction, by the needs of the individuals that compose it, has no lot in this new society. Whoever is willing to receive from his fellowmen, that for which he gives no equivalent, will stay away from its precints forever.[40]

The Brook Farm experiment reflected one of the main princples in the social aims of education of some of the transcendentalists, namely to train the individual to find a useful place in society. The school which was known as the Institute of Agriculture and Education was dedicated to the preparation of a society of liberal, intelligent and cultivated persons. It is said that Emerson's refusal to join the experiment at Brook Farm at the invitation of George Ripley, caused a rift in transcendentalism between the associationists and the individualists. Emerson, as leader of the individualists, found it difficult for a while, although events were to reveal his desires for compromise between these opposing views.

Conscious of his wavering position on this issue of the utilitarian purpose of education, Emerson admitted that he was "utterly at a loss in suggesting particular reform in our ways of teaching."[41] He also expressed his concern for the practical aims of education: "By your own act you teach the beholder how to do the practicable."[42] Thus, Henry David Gray, while not overlooking Emerson's vacillation,

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[40] Elizabeth Palmer Peabody in "Plan of the West Roxbury Community," as quoted by Perry Miller, op. cit., p. 468.

[41] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Complete Writings (New York: Wm. H. Wise, 1875), Vol. II, pp. 994.

[42] Ibid. p. 995.

reminds his readers of "Emerson's insistence upon the necessity of manual labor and scientific and technical training as a basis for education."[43]

In general, therefore, it can be said that the transcendentalists recognized the need for practical and vocational education. Such education had not kept pace wtih American industrial expansion. Frederick Henry Hedge was quite critical of the system of education at Harvard which stressed only the intellectual aspects. He urged that it be replaced by a system which aimed at the education of the whole man, for "man was made to labor with the hand as well as with the brain."[44] Elizabeth Palmer Peabody ascribed to this view, declaring that young agriculturists must learn "not only the skillful practice," but also "the scientific reasons of their work."[45] And George Ripley conceived that from the kindergarten to the highest level the school should establish a systematic industrial arts program "to combine mental and physical labor, the worker and the intellectual."[46] American education has since reflected these considerations.

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43 Henry David Gray, Emerson (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., New York, 1958), p. 93.

44 Hedge, op. cit., p. 117.

45 Elizabeth Palmer Peabody in "Plan of the West Roxbury Community", as quoted by Perry Miller, op. cit., p. 468.

46 Charles Crowe, George Ripley, Transcendentalist and Utopian Socialist (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1967), p. 155.

B. Implications for Equality of Educational Opportunity

Fundamental to the doctrine of transcendentalism was the belief in the substantive, independent existence of the soul of man. The existence does not depend on education, custom, command or anything else beyond man himself. The transcendentalists believed in the equal worth of every soul. Every man is one by reason and thought, with the Divine Essence, i.e. God. Emerson once wrote in 1835:

> It (the Divine Essence) is in all men, even the worst and constitutes them mem. In bad men it is dormant, not the good efficient: but it is perfect and identifiable in all, underneath the peculiarities, the vices, and the errors of the individual.[47]

It is true that the transcendentalists seemed to believe in inequality of the intellect to the extent that no amount of education could equate the original intellectual endowments. Emerson made this view quite clear in a letter to Edward Bliss Emerson on November 15, 1827:

> Hence 'tis vain to regenerate mankind by a patent education whilst the evil we would cure is out of the reach of education, viz, the original inequality of intellect.[48]

However, in a general way, the transcendentalists expressed disapproval of an intellectual elite. Orestes A. Bronson pleaded for the inclusion of the common man, deploring the notion that a national literature is the creation of a few great men. "A great man, he wrote," is merely the glass which concentrates the rays of greatness scattered through the

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[47] As quoted by Henry David Gray, op. cit., p. 37.

[48] The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson ed. R. L. Rusk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939). I, p. 220.

minds and hearts of the people."[49]

This interest in "the people" had considerable implications for equality of educational opportunity. First of all, the transcendentalists did not fail to proclaim their belief in the dignity and worth of every individual regardless of his station in life. Their general denunciation of slavery bears this out. Emerson condemned slavery and called upon Christianity to speak for the poor and the low. Henry David Thoreau was equally fervent in his denunciation of slavery:

> I pity the poor in bondage that have none to help them.... It is my sympathy with the oppressed and the wronged, that are as good as you, and as precious in the sight of God.[50]

Transcendentalism not only contributed much to the anti-slavery crusade but it played a not inconsiderable role in championing women's rights. Indeed the transcendental metaphysic which inevitably provided the platform for a new critique of the social structure, soon posed the problem between the sexes in new terms with some arguments for sexual equality. Emerson looked kindly upon the agitation for women's rights even though he stopped short at the prospect of their going to the polls. Frederic Henry Hedge also spoke in their favor, urging the rights as well as the obligations of women.

The transcendentalists had some reservations as they urged women's rights. Caleb Sprague Henry spoke for many transcendentalists when he argued that he favored the rights of women provided that such rights

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[49] Perry Miller, op. cit., p. 432.

[50] Henry David Thoreau, Antin Slavery and Reform Papers, ed. H. A. Salt (London; Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1890), p. 80.

did not unfit them for their true calling, viz, to be good wives and mothers. He questioned the wisdom of giving suffrage of all women. He admitted that it was in order for women to enter any activity which was considered exclusively men's domain, but warned that women might find it difficult to compete with men. "The world has a way of its own, in such things." he observed. "It will employ and pay those who do the world's work best."[51]

But what proved to be more effective then anything the transcendentalists might have said to demonstrate their concern for women's rights was the transcendentalist' invitation to certain women to join the Transcendental Club. Three women, Margaret Fuller, Sophia Ripley, and Elizabeth Peabody were invited to the meeting of the Transcendental Club at George Ripley's house on September 16, 1836, which included Emerson, Hedge and Alcott. Surely, these women must have gained inspiration and encouragement for their cause. Indeed it was Margaret Fuller who made the greatest impression on her times with her booklet Women in The Nineteenth Century, published in New York in 1845.

Margaret Fuller's publication is considered a pioneer work for the Women's rights movement in the United States and even influenced the calling of the Senaca Falls Convention in 1848. At that conference a

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[51] C.S. Henry, Dr. Oldham, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1860), p. 238.

declaration of independence was signed:

> In view of this disfranchisment of one half of the people of this country... and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, therfore they do insist upon an immediate admission into all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.[52]

Another convention which was very significant, and which Emerson at last consented to address, was the Women's Rights Convention which was held in Boston on June 7, 1855. The substance of his speech before that convention elaborated on the idea of equal opportunity for women which he voiced five years earlier in a letter to Mrs. P. W. Davis on September 18, 1850. His statement at that time that women "be eligible to all offices as men,"[53] had strong implications for equality of educational opportunity for women, for it reflected views which were similar to those of Margaret Fuller some sixteen years earlier.

In 1839, Margaret Fuller declared that the real problem of inequality of educational opportunity for women had less to do with quality of education provided to women than with the opportunity to use their education. Concerning this she wrote:

> Women are now taught at school all that men are. They run over, superficially, even more studies without being really taught anything. But with this difference: men are called on, from a very early period, to reproduce all that they learn.

Transcendentalist views have thus given an additional impetus to equal educational opportunity for women.

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52 As quoted by Thomas Woody in A History of Women's Education in the United States (New York: The Science Press, 1929), I, p. 118.

53 The Letters of R. W. Emerson, Vol. IV, p. 230.

This new plea for equal opportunity for utilizing their education was indeed very important. Catherine Beecher worked fairly successfully for about half a century to increase the number of women's institutions of learning in the United States urging that every young lady may have an opportunity of adding to the advantages of the ordinary course of education."[54]The foundation of freedom and equality in intellectual pursuits was thereby laid. But this was not enough. Women needed to have equal opportunity in seeking certain positions, otherwise their education would be in vain. In fact, lack of such opportunity continued to negate the effectiveness of the gain in equal opportunity at the turn of the twentieth century as Abraham Flexner discovered.

The Flexner Report on Medical Education in the United States amd Canada, revealed that medical education in America was open to women on practically the same terms as men. The report continued:

> If all institutions do not receive women, so many do, that no woman desiring an education in medicine is under any disability in finding a school to which she may gain admittance. Her choice is free and varied She will find schools of every grade accessible.

Strangely enough, however, the report also noted that although women were freely admitted to the medical schools, it was clear that they have showed "a decreasing inclination to enter it."[55] This situation had arisen partly from the lack of a strong demand for women physicians. This was

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[54]As quoted by Thomas Woody, op. cit., p. 422.

[55]Abraham Flexner, Medical Education in the United States and Canada (Boston: D. B. Updike, The Merrymount Press, 1910), p. 178.

generally true in other professions as well.

The principle that women should be given the same opportunity as men to use their education received strong support from the transcendentalists. This is a powerful principle which holds promise not only for women, but for all socially disadvantaged people.

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